

3 November 1966

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Last year, this briefing was devoted almost entirely to the political, economic, and military situation in the Soviet Union, the Chinese Communist military establishment, and a quick look at Vietnam.

Today, I propose to limit the Soviet and Chinese picture to significant changes during the past year--particularly the leadership shake-up in Peking. Then I will try to condense the situation and the prospects in Vietnam, and this should leave time for a quick look at some of the other trouble spots around the world which are always with us. This sort of a global tour has to be arbitrarily selective, so I propose to leave as much time as possible for questions so that we can deal with areas which may be of particular interest to you.

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To summarize state of Soviet defense, science, and technology, Soviet Union is moving as fast as it can to improve its ~~strategic~~ strategic position vis-a-vis US over next few years, but conclusion of our estimates is that they are not likely to achieve any major shift in the power balance which would make it possible for them to adopt a substantially more aggressive posture.

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[redacted] The leadership convulsions

and the Red Guard sideshow have guaranteed full
employment for the Sinologists.

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Mao [redacted] is extremely dissatisfied
with the performance and-from his viewpoint--the reliability
of the Chinese Communist party machinery.

He has turned on a number of men who used to be billed
as his closest comrades, who on the surface would appear to
be the most logical men to implement and ensure the radical
programs Mao wants.

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Instead, the shakeup has brought military leaders, and the top government technicians, to the top of the pyramid, and the purge has centered on the top men in the party.

Mao, in fact, apparently placed so little faith in the party machinery that he has preferred to create an entirely new--and largely uncontrollable--organism: the teen-age Red Guard--to carry out the shake-up.

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The former number two, Liu Shao-chi [redacted] is probably on the way out [redacted] Liu is listed as #8 now, and Teng #6, but they are being criticized with increasing frequency on Red Guard posters.

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Peng Chen, of [redacted] leaves only Chou En-lai for the long-term future.

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The purge in effect has taken the titular chief of state, the secretary-general of the Central Committee, the Mayor of Peking, the chief propagandist (Lu Ting-i) and the chief of the general staff--who was actually more party than military.

In the party secretariat, assuming that the Red Guard will deal with Teng and Li Hsueh-feng, the purge ~~has~~ so far will have taken six out of 10 full members, and two of the three alternate members.

Three men have moved up far and fast:

T'ao Chu, who has been a regional leader on the Central Committee

Chen Po-ta, an old-timer who has been reported as Mao's ghost-writer; and

K'ang Sheng, member of the Party Secretariat and the party specialist for foreign intelligence.

It is impossible to say just where the purge is going to go from here. If it is any consolation, there have been indications that the ChiCom leaders themselves may be confused. October 18th massed Red Guards stood by for a big rally in a Peking square for more than eight hours, finally were treated to a high-speed motorcade, which to use indicated leaders either couldn't decide who should speak, or what should be said.

Also, Red Guards are a volatile instrument. Hard getting them back out of town to farms where they're needed.

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With as unpredictable an instrument as that, future should be interesting, but all we can say for ~~MSX~~ ^(of benefits) sure right now is that it holds little promise for either USSR or US. "Revisionism"(pro-Sovietism) is favorite charge of Red Guard. and if the new leaders have anything in common with those who have been purged, it is an implacable hostility to the United States.

The entire situation is highly unstable. The events of the past year must have intensified the antagonisms and mistrust among those leaders who have survived the purge.

The possibility has therefore increased that when Mao finally does go, the succession will be disorderly, marked by factional struggles, and probably by bloody purges.

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As for the war in Vietnam,

For better or for worse, warfare today is measured by more statistics than baseball, and almost any attempt to analyze how the war is going is bound to bog down in a mass of figures and charts. I will try to limit this to some of the statistics that point up significant trends.

I should warn you that if you rely too much on these statistics, they will puzzle you as much as they enlighten.

For example, in the first nine months this year, by actual body count, there were more than 40,000 Viet Cong and North Vietnamese killed in action--which was 5,000 more than in the entire year of 1965.

In the first nine months of this year, more than 13,000 former supporters of the Viet Cong rallied to the government side--again substantially more than for the entire year of 1965. It is particularly encouraging that about four fifths of these so-called "Chieu Hoi Returnees" are military personnel from either Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army formations.

Those two figures alone, without making any allowance for the wounded, would appear to account for almost half of the estimated enemy main force strength at the end of 1965.

In point of fact, however, at the end of last year we ~~xxxxxx~~ were facing 105 enemy battalions of main force combat troops. Today our order of battle shows 180 enemy battalions

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The answer, of course, lies to some degree in local Viet Cong recruitment of replacements, but to a much greater degree in infiltration.

Cadres drawn from the North Vietnamese Army were being infiltrated into South Vietnam in substantial numbers as far back as 1961, along with formations of Southerners who had chosen to re-group to the North when the country was divided in 1954.

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Before the build-up of U.S. combat forces began, the North Vietnamese had begun sending in battalions and then regiments of regular North Vietnamese Army troops. Today, they are infiltrating entire divisions.

Our order of battle today identifies ^{enemy} 32/regiments. 19 of these are North Vietnamese Army units; only 13 are Viet Cong regiments, and these have North Vietnamese leaders, cadres, and specialists.

One of the Defectors earlier this year, for example,

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[redacted] confirmed for us reports which we had received earlier that three of the key men in the Central Office for South Vietnam, which is the executive and military side of the so-called National Liberation Front, are ~~very many~~ generals in the North Vietnamese regular army and either members or candidate members of the Central Committee of the Lao Dong, the Communist Party of North Vietnam.

The head of the Central Office, which directs both the military and the political apparatus of the Communists in South Vietnam, is ^{General} Nguyen Chi Thanh, a member of the North Vietnamese politburo, and second in command of the entire North Vietnamese military establishment behind Defense Minister Giap. Thanh has been in South Vietnam since early 1965.

His deputy in charge of the National Liberation Front is North Vietnamese General Tran Do, a member of the Hanoi Central Committee.


The commander of what we call the Viet Cong and they call the National Liberation Army is General Thanh's other deputy, using the alias Tran Nam Trung. Actually, he is General Tran Van Tra, who used to be deputy chief of staff of the North Vietnamese Army. He is also a member of the Central Committee of the North Vietnamese Communist Party.

Increasingly, then, in South Vietnam we are fighting regular formations of the North Vietnamese Army, commanded by North Vietnamese generals.


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How are we doing, militarily?

Well, here I am going to use a couple of charts. 

One shows that since the U.S. build-up began in mid-1965, a great gap has been widened between the KIA figures for the enemy and for the friendly troops. This is an abrupt reverse of the trend before our participation.

The other shows a continuing trend in which the number of actual Viet Cong attacks have been going down, while the number of incidents other than attacks continues to rise. 

Militarily, while the enemy still attacks in battalion and even regimental strength where he finds an attractive and lightly defended target, the initiative has passed into allied hands.

The hallmark of SVN fighting today is the massive allied "spoiling operation"--a major effort to force enemy concentrations to stand and fight. This is the strategy which has brought the results you've seen in KIA figures. Also has ~~presented enemy from~~ frustrated enemy attempts to launch major offensives during monsoon seasons when they are relatively safer from allied air and quick reaction. 

Latest example PRAIRIE -- in three months, six USMC bns operating in area where two NVA Divs are trying to get set for major monsoon operation have killed 1,210 enemy while losing 168 US KIA.

In part this results from greatly improved walk-in intelligence, which is a healthy political indicator of symathies and loyalties. Or at least shows people now have less fear of VC.

I suspect, however, that these curves on charts are what economists call asymptotic---they keep approaching but never touch top or bottom.

There is still a long way to go.

We have in past month

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directed successful spoiling ops at enemy concentrations in divisional strength at DMZ, in highlands, and ^{north} ~~south~~ of ~~Qui Nhon~~ ~~Da Nang~~. But there are still those 180 enemy battalions in field. And the incidents keep rising. They may seem insignificant, but assassinations, kidnappings, terrorism, mean that the job of long-range pacification is still in the very ~~beginning~~ beginnings.

Something just over half the population is responsive to Saigon control now, but this includes urban populations, which means that the ~~XXXXXX~~ government controls considerably less than half of the area. So does VC, for that matter. Preponderant propotion of area is "Indian Country," ideal for small guerrilla ops.

As for manpower, the North Vietnamese have barely begun to send in the more than one quarter million men in their army, and the pace of infiltration continues to increase.

So where do we go from here?

There is a factor of diminishing returns built into the big search-and-destroy operations. The more they succeed, the more the enemy will revert to classic hit-and-run guerrilla tactics, leaving few targets for the spoiling ops. The enemy has to give up his plan to move into the final, frontal stage of wars of liberation--the Dien Bien Phu stage, in Giap's terminology--but he does not necessarily surrender the field.

We cannot isolate the battlefield. (short of some massive and virtually unthinkable military cordon across DRV and Laotian Panhandles. Logistic reqms of VC/PAVN are such that 105 bns fighting once every 36 days at beginning of this year needed 12 tons a day--- and if ~~maximize~~ by bombing and monsoons we could interdict every ~~and~~ road, trail, ~~and~~ railroad and waterway in the Panhandles--as we try to---the essentials would still come in on backs of an army of porters slipping thru jungle.

We have two prospects which complement each other: firstly, hold the ^{line} ~~front~~ militarily while under this shield ^{and environment} pacification destroys the conditions/in which guerrillas can operate successfully; secondly, convince enemy he is going to lose. He probably realizes that at the moment he is not winning, but he is not yet convinced that South Vietnam's allies will not weary of the war, and he is not yet convinced that he is going to lose in the long run.

In South Vietnam today, the Communists have an estimated 125,000 main force, and 160,000 irregulars ====total of nearly 290,000.

SVN has about 320,000 regulars, 390,000 paramilitary.

Third countries--principally Koreans--have 51,000.

We have 345,000, making a grand total of 1,106,000 or just under four times enemy strength.

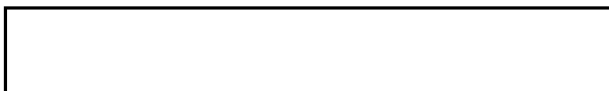
We are probably going to need more men, and nobody is going to promise to have them home by Thanksgiving, or Christmas, or Easter, during the coming year or even the year after that. It isn't that kind of a war. It is a test of staying power.

All this makes the political process in Saigon all the ~~last~~ more important. The Ky regime has managed to hold two elections in the past 18 months, first for regional councils and then for constitutional assembly.

Assembly has finally gotten organized, and now has until March 27 to draft constitution. After that there will presumably be parliamentary elections, and the turn-over to a civilian government. It is a long and fragile process, but in our estimation, there has been continuing progress in the right direction ever since the present regime overcame the challenge of the militant Buddhist minority last spring. It is too early to quote odds, but there is at least a chance that by next fall there will be a government which can make a start toward providing a sense of national unity, and some meaning and purpose

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Using items from 6 October briefing of Stennis
Preparedness Investigating Subcommittee, updated
from attached notes and weeklies, briefed very
very briefly on highlights of the following:

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NATO AND DE GAULLE



CONGO
RHODESIA
NIGERIA
FR. SOMALILAND AND HORN OF AFRICA

SYRIA-ISRAEL
YEMEN

THAILAND, LAOS, CAMBODIA

CUBAN SUBVERSION IN LA--Venezuela, Guatemala, Colombia

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